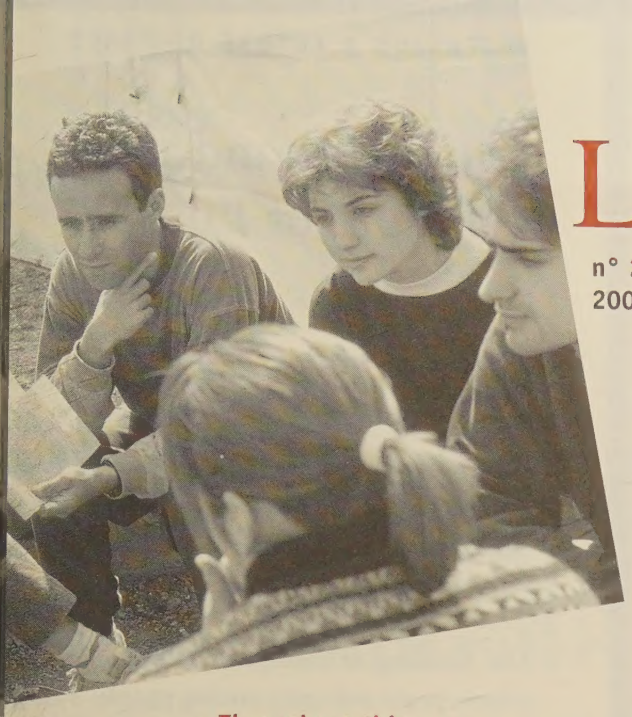

Letter from Taizé

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A Civilization of Trust

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Throughout this year, we are reflecting on the different parts of Brother Alois' *Letter from Kenya*. In this issue, all the articles take up the themes of the *Message to the European Union* entitled "For an open Europe, a land of solidarity", that Brother Alois wrote just before the meeting in Brussels to accompany the *Letter from Kenya*.

GERMANY

The Gospel encourages simplicity of life. It calls believers to bring their own desires under control in order to succeed in setting limits, not by constraint but by choice. Freely chosen simplicity enables those who are privileged to resist the race to acquire what is superfluous and contributes to the struggle against the poverty imposed on those who are deprived. (*Message to the European Union*)

Johannes, a 21-year-old German, recently spent two years at Taizé as a volunteer. He writes:

For us young people particularly, the beginning of professional life nowadays offers seemingly unlimited possibilities for consumption and personal development. At a time when the economic crisis makes it clear to us how much focusing only on professional and financial success is increasingly able to determine our lives, we are almost astonished to come upon the unambiguous call of Christ to follow him in radical simplicity (Matthew 19).

During the past two years that I spent as a volunteer in Taizé, I was able to glimpse to what an extent this call of the Gospel does not wish to set limits to our joy in living and to our involvement. On the contrary, it opens a way for us to welcome our life in simple trust as a gift and to give it back in an involvement for others.

One of the first things that strikes people in Taizé is the simplicity of the life, in accommodations, food, and in the prayer with its silence and repetitive singing. There is above all a simplicity of community life, in which you constantly are surprised to notice the complete lack of relationships of domination.

Freed from desires for material possessions and worrying about appearances, we recognize to an ever greater extent how much in the depths of our being we are longing for communion with God and with our fellow human beings. One could say that simplicity frees our eyes to see where the presence of Christ in our entire life becomes the most valuable thing we have.

It is above all the community life in Taizé that constantly verifies the intuition of Brother Roger that, when it is lived out in the spirit of the Beatitudes, with kindness and joy, simplicity of life does not become sad austerity.

It is probably this experience that motivates us young people, during our stay in Taizé but also upon our return home, to ask ourselves questions not just about our own lifestyle, but also our responsibilities for the world.

For me personally, this is expressed on the one hand in the studies of political science I am beginning in order to understand better and better the structures of our society. And it continues as well through my political involvement in a party that is committed to equal possibilities for all people, independent of their origins or financial means.

In this way, a simple lifestyle motivated by faith, one that keeps our eyes open for the needs of our fellow human beings, is both a reminder and an incentive. Yes, it is possible and necessary to build a future of equal rights for all.

LITHUANIA

Promoting steps toward forgiveness is another contribution of Christians. Such steps imply the refusal to pass on to the next generation rancour for still festering wounds—not to forget a painful past but to heal the memory by forgiveness, interrupting

Continued on last page

Becoming a Disciple of Christ

> Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save their life will lose it; but anyone who loses their life for my sake will save it. What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose their very self?" (Luke 9:23-25)

Steeped in the life of Christ and his love for others, the disciples are men and women who want to live as he lived. During the public life of Jesus, a crowd of disciples walked behind him. They followed him from one place to another to hear his teaching. Some of them continued to follow him until the very end, in the darkest hours of the cross and of his death. But there were only a few of them. Many had gone away earlier, having stayed with him for a longer or shorter time.

For those who want to walk with him, Christ's call is radical and unequivocal. He asks us to "renounce" ourselves. This is a difficult word for the mentality of today. It does not mean that we must deny what we are. We are called to abandon that part of ourselves that goes against the life of Christ and his teachings. With verse 25, we understand clearly that Jesus does not ask us to lose ourselves. He rather invites us to discover our true self by following him. It is not by a lukewarm and lazy attitude, but only with all their heart and all their strength that the disciples can follow the path of the Master.

The cross which Jesus speaks of here is that of "every day" that each person is called to bear. Jesus knew that his followers would face many trials and difficulties. He encouraged them to be daring, to accept the challenge, to give themselves for the Gospel without being afraid of suffering and thus to find the fullness of life.

In fact, if we walk in the footsteps of Christ, now just as at the time of the Apostles, it is inevitable that we will have to have to swim against the tide and, at times, become a "sign of contradiction" in society. For fear of losing face or security, will we turn back before the various obstacles, or move forward with confidence, audacity and the gift of ourselves? Christ himself did not suffer passively but gave his life for others. It is true that his call is demanding. But to those who give themselves because of Christ and the Gospel, the joy and the rewards promised are offered a hundredfold (see Mark 10:28-30).

What does it mean for me to "walk in the steps of Christ" today? What is "my cross", the one I am called to "carry every day" on this road?

In what circumstances do we become a "sign of contradiction" in our societies?

Christians and the Building of Europe

Jerome, aged 26, from Paris, is engaged in vari projects aimed at educating youth, especially yo Christians, about the importance of building Euro He writes:

The building of Europe was begun in order achieve peace and unity among people. This goa reflected in solidarity, with a budget meant to h the less economically advanced countries (Irelan Spain and Portugal in the 1990s, Poland, Hung among others in the 2000s) by means of the co tribution of richer countries.

Attentiveness to our neighbor, solidarity a peace are among the key messages highlight in the Gospels. In this we can see a connecti between the building of Europe as a political ality and Christianity. Without turning Euro into a Christian club, which it is not intend to be, the fact remains that the contribution Christians to the building of Europe is real.

We are well aware of the Christian faith pr fessed by the founding fathers of the building Europe in the 1950s (Schuman, Adenauer, Mo net, De Gasperi) as well as by some more rece political leaders, whether they are well-knov (Jacques Delors, Romano Prodi...) or not. The men and women did not aim to make Euro Christian, but to allow Europe as a whole be influenced by Gospel values, in other wor to make the continent a place tending towar peace, justice and love.

In the beginning, the ECSC (European Co munity of Steel and Coal) devised ways of brin ing people together, and it made concrete Chris invitation to love one another. This adventu "this new policy was based on solidarity a growth in trust. It was an act of faith (...) in t common sense of peoples finally convinced th their salvation lay in mutual understanding a cooperation" (Robert Schuman, *For Europe*).

The Christians who initiated this proc therefore bore witness to this hope: life is stron

God, you love us. Baptized in the Holy Spirit, we have for ever welcomed Christ. And to each one of us you say: "You are unique to me, in you I find my joy."

JANUARY

DAILY READINGS

1 Ep 2:14-18
Fri Christ came to announce the joyful message of peace: peace to those who are far away, peace to those who are near. Through him, in one Spirit, we all have free access to the Father.

2 Am 5:4,24
Sat God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

3 Mt 2:1-12
SUN When they saw the star, the wise men were filled with a great joy. As they entered, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they knelt down and worshipped him.

4 Is 9:1-6 (1-7)
Mon To us a child is born, to us a son is given. And this is the name he has been given: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

5 Hab 3:18-19
Tue I shall rejoice in the Lord, I shall exult in God my saviour.

6 Ep 3:2-6
Wed EPIPHANY
Paul writes: The mystery of Christ is that all peoples now share the same inheritance, being members of one body, and having received the same promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.

7 Dn 3:51-90 (A:65-66)
Thu Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart, praise and glorify him forever! For God has rescued us from the hand of death.

8 Ps 142
Fri Set me free from prison, Lord, that I may praise your name.

9 Rm 6:20-23
Sat Paul writes: Now you have been set free from sin and are in the service of God, you will gain the holiness that leads to eternal life.

10 Lk 3:15-22
SUN The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

11 Jn 1:29-34
Mon John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him and said: There is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

12 Ps 40
Tue I waited for the Lord and he heard my cry. He put a fresh song in my mouth: a hymn of praise to our God.

13 Jn 14:1-10
Wed Jesus said: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

14 Ps 147
Thu Give praise to the Lord! It is good to sing praises to the one who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

15 Mt 4:1-11
Fri Jesus said to the tempter: Away with you! For Scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone".

16 Jn 4:1-42
Sat Jesus said: My food is to do the will of the One who sent me and to complete his work.

17 Jn 2:1-12
SUN The first of Jesus' signs was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

18 Is 29:15-21
Mon When the Lord comes, the deaf will hear the words of the book and, delivered from shadows and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see. The poor and resourceless will find fresh joy in God.

19 Jn 10:11-18
Tue Jesus said: There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.

20 Ps 16
Wed Lord, you teach me the way of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.

21 Rm 6:8-14
Thu St. Paul writes: Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

22 Jm 3:13-18
Fri Peacemakers sow the seeds which will bear fruit in justice.

23 Is 43:9-12
Sat You yourselves are my witnesses, declares the Lord, you are the servant whom I have chosen.

24 Lk 4:14-21
SUN Jesus read out these words of Isaiah the prophet: The Spirit of the Lord is on me. God has sent me to announce good news to the afflicted, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed.

25 Ac 26:1-23
Mon The Risen Christ said to Paul: I am sending you out so that people may turn from darkness to light and receive forgiveness of their sins through faith in me.

26 Ps 25
Tue Guide me in your truth and teach me, Lord, for you are the God who saves me.

27 Mt 18:21-35
Wed Jesus told a parable in which a king says to his servant: I cancelled all your debt because you begged me to. Shouldn't you then have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you?

28 Lk 9:1-6
Thu Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

29 Zc 8:7-8
Fri The Lord God says: Look, I shall rescue my people, gathering them from east and west. They will be my people and I shall be their God, faithful and just.

30 Jn 1:1-5
Sat In the beginning was the Word. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people.

31 1 Co 13:1-13
SUN Paul writes: Even if I can understand all mysteries and know all things, even if I have the faith to move mountains, if I am without love I am nothing.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

FEBRUARY

DAILY READINGS

Holy Spirit, Comforter, to us, the humble of the Gospel, you have entrusted a mystery of hope. Even when we are unaware of it, it is there, sustaining our trust.

1 Ac 5:17-33
Mon God has raised Jesus from the dead to make him Saviour, and through him to change our hearts and grant forgiveness of sins.

2 Lk 2:22-32
Tue PRESENTATION OF THE LORD Simeon took the child Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying: My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples — a light to enlighten the nations.

3 Ws 7:7-10
Wed I have loved God's wisdom more than health or beauty — even preferring her to the light, for her radiance will never cease.

4 Lk 12:4-12
Thu Jesus said to his disciples: When you are placed under accusation, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.

5 Jn 12:47-50
Fri Jesus said: I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

6 Ep 4:7-16
Sat If we live in love and in truth, then in all things we shall grow into Christ, who is the head. By him, the whole body grows and builds itself up in love.

7 Lk 5:1-11
SUN Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch." "Master," Simon replied, "we have worked hard all night long without catching anything, but because you say so I will let down the nets."

8 Phm 1-25
Mon Paul writes: May our fellowship in faith lead you to full knowledge of all the good we can accomplish for Christ.

9 Ga 6:7-10
Tue Let us not become tired of doing good. The harvest will come in good time if we persevere.

10 Ps 94
Wed Your faithful love supports me, Lord. However great the anxiety of my heart, your consolation brings joy to the soul.

11 Is 11:1-10
Thu Isaiah said: God's Spirit will be upon the Messiah. He will not judge by appearances, but he will judge the weak with justice and give fair sentence for the humble in the land.

12 Is 2:1-5
Fri The peoples of the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, for him to teach us his ways and for us to walk in his paths.

13 Is 49:8-15
Sat The Lord says: My people will not go hungry or thirsty, they will not be scorched by the heat of the desert, for the one who has compassion on them will be with them, guiding them to springs of water.

14 Lk 6:20-23
SUN Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

15 Is 54:1-10
Mon God says: Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, my faithful love for you will not be shaken.

16 Mk 1:21-28
Tue After hearing Jesus, people were amazed and said to each other, "Here is a new teaching, and with authority behind it: he even gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey him!"

17 Mt 6:1-6
Wed ASH WEDNESDAY Jesus said: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your generosity be secret. And your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.

18 Jr 15:15-21
Thu The Lord says: If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. I am with you to save you and free you.

19 Mt 3:1-12
Fri John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

20 Ps 145
Sat All look to you in hope, O God. And with generous hand, you satisfy every living creature.

21 Lk 4:1-13
SUN Jesus answered the tempter saying, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

22 Jl 2:12-13
Mon The Lord says: Come back to me with all your heart. Come back to the Lord your God who is tender and compassionate, and rich in faithful love.

23 1 P 1:3-9
Tue Though you are troubled by all kinds of trials, you are full of joy. For your faith, which is worth more than gold — that perishes even though it is refined by fire — will result in praise when Christ Jesus is revealed.

24 Ws 7:21-30
Wed God's wisdom renews the universe. From one generation to another she passes into souls to make them friends of God.

25 Heb 13:1-3
Thu Be mindful of prisoners as if you yourselves were in prison with them, and of those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were also suffering.

26 Mk 1:1-8
Fri Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

27 Is 12:1-6
Sat I will trust and not be afraid, for God is my strength and my song.

28 Lk 9:28-36
SUN Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him.

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MARCH

DAILY READINGS

1 Rm 13:11-14
Mon Paul writes: Let us put aside the deeds of darkness. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Hos 10:12
Tue From the book of the prophet Hosea: Sow saving justice for yourselves and reap a harvest of faithful love. It is time to seek out the Lord until he comes to rain saving justice down on you.

3 Heb 11:8-16
Wed Our predecessors in faith recognized that they were exiles and nomads on this earth. In this way, they showed clearly that they were in search of their real homeland. And God has prepared a city for them.

4 1 Th 3:6-13
Thu Paul writes: Your faith has been a great encouragement to us in the middle of our own distress and hardship.

5 Mt 6:1-6,16-18
Fri Jesus said: When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who is there in secret.

6 Dt 8:14-18
Sat Moses said to the people: Do not forget the Lord your God who delivered you from the land of slavery, who guided you through this vast desert, and who in a waterless place gave you water out of hard rock.

7 Ex 3:1-15
SUN Moses said to God, "If I tell the people: 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am; thus you shall say to them, '«I am» has sent me to you.'"

8 Ps 4
Mon Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. You have set me free from my distress.

9 Is 51:11-16
Tue Those whom the Lord has freed will return with singing, radiant with an everlasting joy.

10 Heb 10:32-39
Wed Remember the first days when, after having received the light of faith, you stood your ground in the face of great suffering. All your belongings were seized, and you accepted this joyfully because you knew that you had better and lasting possessions.

11 Ps 71
Thu Ever hopeful, O Lord, I will praise you more and more, my lips shall proclaim your justice.

12 Ezk 34:1-16
Fri The Lord says: I will take care of my flock. I shall look for the lost sheep, bring back the strays, bandage the injured and strengthen the sick. I shall watch over the one that is healthy and strong.

13 Mk 5:1-20
Sat Jesus said to the man he had healed: Go home to your people and tell them everything the Lord has done for you in his mercy.

14 2 Co 5:18-21
SUN Paul writes: In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

15 Ps 119:17-24
Mon Though I am a stranger upon the earth, do not hide your will from me. My soul is consumed with longing for it.

16 Ps 37:27-40
Tue The salvation of the just comes from God. He is their refuge in times of trouble.

17 Mk 12:1-12
Wed Jesus said of himself: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone: this is the Lord's doing.

18 Mt 5:44-48
Thu Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. You must set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his.

19 Mt 1:16-21
Fri St JOSEPH
An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

20 Mt 20:17-19
Sat Jesus said: The Son of man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and turn him over to be mocked, scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised up again.

21 Jn 8:1-11
SUN Jesus said to the woman who had been brought before him: "Where are those who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir", she said. "Neither do I condemn you", said Jesus, "Go, and sin no more."

22 Rm 5:1-11
Mon While we were still powerless, at the time chosen by God, Christ died for those who were without God.

23 Jn 16:23-33
Tue Jesus said: The Father himself loves you, because you love me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world to go to the Father.

24 Lk 22:28-34
Wed Jesus said to Peter: I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back to me, strengthen your brothers.

25 Ps 40:7-12
Thu Here I am, I have come and, as it is written, I desire to do your will, my God. Your law is deep within my heart.

26 Is 53:1-5
Fri The servant of the Lord bore our suffering. We have been healed by his wounds.

27 Mt 24:32-36
Sat Jesus said: Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

28 Lk 19:28-40
SUN PALM SUNDAY
As Jesus came into Jerusalem, the crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out: Blessed is the one who comes as king in the name of the Lord!

29 Jn 15:9-17
Mon Jesus said: There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves.

30 Jn 16:20-22
Tue Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and your hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

31 Rm 5:1-11
Wed The proof that God loves us is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been reconciled to God by Christ's death, how much more shall we be saved by his life!

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Jesus of compassionate mercy, you enable us to transmit to those around us a flame of hope by the trust of our hearts.

APRIL

DAILY READINGS

1 Jn 13:1-15
Thu Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, now loved them to the end.

2 Lk 23:33-34
Fri GOOD FRIDAY
On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

3 Rm 6:3-11
Sat Buried with Christ in baptism, we live a new life with him.

4 Jn 20:1-9
SUN EASTER DAY
When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed.

5 2 Co 1:8-11
Mon Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

6 Is 44:21-28
Tue Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has acted! Mountains, burst into song, for the Lord has redeemed his people!

7 Zc 13:1-2
Wed The Lord says: When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for my people and it will wash away sin and impurity.

8 Heb 7:23-28
Thu Jesus' power to save those who come to God through him is absolute, because he lives for ever to intercede for them.

9 1 Co 15:12-22
Fri Just as death came through one man, so through one man has come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

10 1 Jn 4:1-4
Sat John writes: You are from God, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

11 Jn 20:24-29
SUN Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied, "You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

12 2 Co 4:7-15
Mon We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up with Jesus and bring us to himself.

13 Heb 13:1-8
Tue Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

14 Ps 96
Wed Sing a new song to the Lord! Praise his name! Proclaim God's salvation, day by day. Tell the nations of his glory!

15 Col 3:1-4
Thu From now on, your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ — who is your life — is revealed, you also will appear with him in glory.

16 1 Jn 4:12-21
Fri No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

17 Jn 14:11-19
Sat Jesus said to his disciples: I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

18 Jn 21:15-19
SUN A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

19 Lk 5:27-32
Mon Jesus noticed a tax collector called Matthew sitting at the tax office and he said to him, "Follow me." And, leaving everything, Matthew got up and followed him.

20 1 P 1:3-9
Tue In his great mercy, God has given us new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

21 Lk 6:17-23
Wed Jesus said: Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

22 1 Co 4:1-5
Thu Paul writes: Judge nothing prematurely, but wait until the Lord comes.

23 Is 54:5-10
Fri With deep compassion I shall bring you back to me, says the Lord, your redeemer.

24 Mk 10:42-45
Sat Jesus said to his disciples: You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects and make their power felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.

25 Jn 10:22-30
SUN Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

26 Is 40:25-28
Mon Isaiah says: Why do you complain, my people, saying, "My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by God"? Do you not know? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the world, who does not tire or grow weary.

27 Ps 26
Tue Examine me, Lord, test my heart and my mind; for your faithful love is before my eyes, and I live my life by your truth.

28 Col 1:24-28
Wed God has wanted to reveal to the nations the splendid riches of the mystery which is Christ in you.

29 Is 42:10-17
Thu The Lord says: I shall lead my people by a road that is unknown to them. I shall turn the darkness into light before them.

30 Ep 3:7-12
Fri Paul writes: Through our faith in Christ Jesus, we can approach God with complete confidence.

God, you love every human person. When we surrender ourselves to you, we come to understand that even what pains our heart is made bright by the Holy Spirit.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

an death. The result is that we, European
ns, have been living without war for nearly
ears, an event which is practically unique
r history. This faith in humanity and in its
y to create life has enabled us to go beyond
national selfishness and the desire for re-
e unfortunately so present at the armistice
918, and which thus prepared the ground
second war.
ristians have contributed significantly to the
ng up of this political structure which has
lished peace. And this construction is also
d on specific actions that are signs of trust
ur brothers and sisters. Who would have
ght in 1945 that so many young Germans
ld visit a monastic community in France, or
965, in the midst of the cold war, that young
le from the Soviet bloc would come in such
t numbers scarcely a generation later? As
istians, are we not called today to give new
ning to our life together in society? Are we
called to show by our lives how to live sim-
so that others may simply live (Gandhi)? Are
not called to promote faith in humanity at
political level, and more particularly at the
opean level, by inventing new forms of soli-
ity?
his Europe is still under construction: "each
eration has to build it" (Brother Alois, *Mes-
e to the European Union*). It is important to
all the past contributions of Christians... but
s undoubtedly just as interesting to ask our-
ves what we can do today to further advance
building of Europe, so that it is "able to con-
bute effectively and in the present moment to
needs of humanity, in response to the new
irations of peoples": the struggle against pov-
y, safeguarding creation, reducing inequalities,
t relations between North and South... "But
must act quickly. Events prove to us every day
at we have no time to lose (...). We cannot pass
an opportunity that will undoubtedly never
cur again" (Robert Schuman, *For Europe*).
Do we have enough confidence in ourselves
dare to come together, to be committed, to
andon ourselves to Providence and in this way
receive a new breath of life that enables us to
ok to the future with hope, by telling us in-
ardly "Yes, we can"?
In the words of Frère Roger, "to prepare a Eu-
pe which is at peace, reconciled, in solidarity
ith other continents, it is important to begin
ithin each and every person".

Do Christians have a role to play in society?

The Message to the European Union speaks of "two contributions of Christians" to the building of Europe. To what extent can and should Christians influence the life of the societies in which they live?

The relationship between the followers of Christ and the surrounding society has varied a great deal over the centuries. The first Christians were aware that Jesus had brought into the world a new way of being, an intimacy with God which led to new relationships of friendship and fellowship between people. They put this vision into practice by creating communities where women and men from diverse backgrounds joined to form a single family. By their words, but above all by the example of their life together, they wanted to share with everyone the gift they had received.

At the same time as they led a life "for others", the early Christians were nonetheless aware that the surrounding society followed different values than their own, values often incompatible with the Gospel. Periods where they were tolerated alternated with periods of active persecution. They never imagined they would be successful in human terms. They knew that they were, like Jesus, "in the world" without being "of the world".

Over time, things changed. In Europe, the Christian faith was eventually accepted by society as a whole and, in this new situation, people were tempted to forget what was distinctive about the Gospel. This led to an inevitable reaction: groups of believers left society, either literally, by moving away from populated places, or by emphasizing their difference by means of a particular lifestyle. If in the case of assimilation the salt is in danger of losing its flavor (see Matthew 5:13) in the latter case the risk is that of removing the yeast from the dough (see Matthew 13:33).

Reflecting on these two extremes can orient our commitment as believers. Can we conceive of a Church that maintains a critical distance from the powers of this world without neglecting the welfare of the human community? A Church that offers Gospel alternatives to the values of the surrounding society without seeing itself as an elite of the pure? A Church that is willing to enter into genuine dialogue with those who have other references without attempting to impose its own views? If Christians remember that, before giving lessons to others, they are the first ones who need to return to God every day (see Matthew 7:3-5), they will be kept free from any attitude of complacency or self-sufficiency. They will know that they bear their treasure in jars of clay (see 2 Corinthians 4:7). At the same time, they will not forget that the Gospel is indeed a treasure and they have no right to keep it just for themselves; they must "always be ready to give an account of the hope that is in them" (1 Peter 3:15).

the chain reaction that causes resentment to endure. (*Message to the European Union*)

From May 1-3, 2009, 8 000 young people attended the meeting organized in Vilnius by the Taizé Community in collaboration with the youth centre of the archdiocese. Thirty host parishes, and hundreds of families of Vilnius and the surrounding region, offered hospitality to young people from all the neighboring countries, but also from several countries further away. What a sign of peace in the human family to hear, in the prayers, readings following one another in Lithuanian and Polish, in Belarusian and Latvian! Despite the vagaries of history, young people from countries so close and yet often quite distant gathered to share what really matters.

The whole city was mobilized to welcome these passing guests. Official information panels gave the program of the prayers and workshops; large banners greeted the pilgrims in front of the main churches, and a park was reserved in the heart of the city for the distribution of meals.

In the course of the afternoon, the young participants and the townspeople gathered in various locations for workshops on very diverse topics: in the cathedral, they were invited to reflect on God's call; in the Lutheran church, on the role of singing in faith; in a museum dedicated to the memory of the Soviet regime, on the weight of the past in contemporary society; at the Orthodox cathedral, on the icons and examples of liturgical chant of Greece, Georgia and Russia; in a theater, on the various folk traditions, including Jewish; in the streets, they could meet the disadvantaged with volunteers with Caritas, and with a Faith and Light community, that also welcomed a group from Moscow.

The prayers in four main churches of the city were moments of intensity during the three days. All turned together to God: bishops from throughout Lithuania, leaders of the Orthodox and Lutheran churches, host families, young people from different backgrounds, the brothers spread out in the different places of prayer.

When the time came to leave, young people and families said goodbye not without emotion. Some did not hide their sense of having lived a very special moment, or even an event of "historic" proportions. These thousands of young people seeking reconciliation and building together the communion of the Church during these days were a real sign of hope... a sign that a future of peace is possible.

GERMANY AND POLAND

Everyone can take part in a civilization marked not by mistrust but by trust. At times, in the course of history, just a few people were enough to tip the scales towards peace. (*Message to the European Union*)

In the months before the European meeting in Poznan, a copy of the icon of the Taizé cross is travelling along the Polish-German border. Through the many small meetings it makes possible, it is a good foreshadowing of the event to be held at the end of the year. This copy, painted by hand, crossed eastern Germany beginning in the 1980s, after the first visit of Brother Roger behind the Berlin Wall. Another copy was travelling at that time in Poland, as well as in other countries.

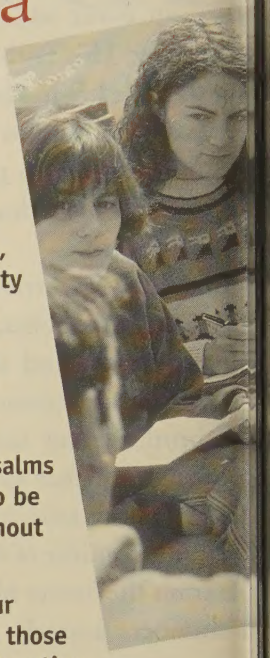
The "pilgrimage of the icon of the cross" has a very simple structure. In the text that accompanies the cross, we read: "This icon can stay two or three days in your parish, in the church but also in centers of hospitality or in homes, in any event in as many locations as possible. Then bring the icon to the next parish."

Twenty years after the wall fell and seventy years after the beginning of World War II, this sign of hope has great significance. The daily newspaper *Sächsische Zeitung* commented: "As far as the Baltic Sea, the cross is visiting German and Polish parishes in turn and thus should help to close a bit more the wound of the Second World War. The symbolism is powerful and should contribute to moving beyond the past."

The icon of the cross stayed first at Frankfurt on the Oder and continued its way through the "border triangle" region where Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic meet, near the town of Zittau. From time to time it is welcomed for larger celebrations. The churches of Zittau have invited their members to an ecumenical prayer before the Cross, extensively decorated for the occasion. Prayer intentions were written and put into bottles thrown into the Neisse River, that marks the border.

Then the icon was brought to Hradek nad Nisou in the Czech Republic and to Porajów in Poland. Its path northward continues on to Görlitz and passes through Cottbus on the way to Guben. Many young people who welcome the cross will doubtlessly meet in Poznan.

A Million Bibles in China



At the Brussels meeting Brother Alois said that, to meet the needs of Christians in China, the Taizé Community was going to print one million Bibles in China, 200,000 complete Bibles and 800,000 New Testaments with Psalms and Ecclesiastes, to be distributed throughout the country.

We wish to send our heartfelt thanks to those who have made a donation for this to Operation Hope and whose addresses we do not have.

This project in China is now well on its way, but we still need help to bring it to a successful completion. Individuals or groups can participate in this project by making a bank transfer to the following account:

Operation Hope, IBAN: FR76 30003 01212 00037260029 02; SWIFT: SOGEFRPP.

Letter from Taizé

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